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Soviets woo military in the West

Suslov says 'military has become a political party'
in Portugal, a shift from Moscow's time-honored focus on 'proletariat'

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The Soviet Union's ideologists are showing increasing interest in the "revolutionary potential" of the West's military personnel.

This interest has been spurred by developments in Portugal, where the Communist Party has worked closely with the Armed Forces Movement and where, according to the chief Soviet theoretician Mikhail A. Suslov, "the military has become a political party."

Moscow's previous time-honored formula for making a revolution has been, at least theoretically, to seek support from the prole-

tariat — the workers and peasants. But recent international developments have led Moscow to declare openly that under certain circumstances, "bourgeois armed forces can become a more effective ally of the Communists than workers and peasants."

An edition of Republica, Lisbon's socialist newspaper which has been closed down and occupied by Communist-led printers and other employees for a month, appeared June 23 in Paris with what it claimed was information about "top-secret" Soviet instructions to Communist parties on how to seize power in the West.

This summary of the purported instruction deals with communism's "practical alliance with the armed forces."

It is quite unlikely that such a document was signed by Boris N. Ponomarev, head of the Soviet party's central committee international department, as Republica claims. The Soviets do not operate that way.

[Reuter reports from Paris that French Socialist leader Francois Mitterrand doubted the authenticity of the document. "I can't believe that Soviet documents float around like this," he said. "I am inclined to think that the document has no historic reality. Things just don't happen like that."]

In essence, however, the purported "instructions" correspond to communism's new tack. Further endorsement of this policy appeared in a 2,000-word document signed by 24 Latin American Communist parties in Havana June 16.

Three departments of the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee are guiding the "fraternal parties" abroad in their attempts to gain a foothold in their countries' armed forces.

Most of the responsibility rests with Mr. Ponomarev as head of the committee's international department, Georgi L. Smirnov, first deputy chief of the Propaganda Department, and General of the Army Alexei A. Yepishchev, chief of the Soviet armed forces' political directorate.

Last year Communist parties in the Americas, West Europe, Africa, and Asia were instructed to step up infiltration into the military. In February, 1974, a special conference of the Italian Communist Party was briefed by Senators Ugo Pecchioli and Arrigo Boldrini, the party's military experts.

The conference called for an expansion of party cells in the barracks and in the navy. It also appealed for new methods to win over officers and non-commissioned officers in the same way in which the party, through the trade unions, gained support among the police.

L'Humanite, the large circulation French Communist Party daily, carries at least once a month reports on Communist activity among the military. The West German party is more discreet, but inside the West German forces, too, the Communists have sympathizers. The Spanish party in exile has a strong military nucleus manned by former civil war officers.